

CHAPTER 13



“Marx’s Relation to Hegel”

—from *Hegel et la Pensée Moderne*
(1970; lecture delivered: 1968)

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I should like to thank Monsieur Jean Hyppolite for the great honour he has done me in inviting me to his Seminar. I am greatly indebted to M. Hyppolite. Among many other achievements, he will go down in the history of French philosophy as the man who has had the courage to translate Hegel and sponsor the publication of Husserl. He has pulled French philosophy away from the reactionary tradition which has dominated, I say *dominated* (for fortunately there have been other elements beneath this domination), its whole history since the French Revolution, a reactionary tradition reinforced by the academic reigns of Lachelier, Bergson and Brunschvicg. In this tradition French chauvinism took the form of the simplest kind of stupidity: ignorance. M. Hyppolite has had the courage to fight against this ignorance. We owe to him our knowledge of Hegel, and through Hegel, the beginnings of an understanding of, among other things, the distance separating Marx from Hegel. Let us not speak of the fate French philosophy has reserved for Marx. Brunschvicg, who thought Hegel mentally retarded, regarded Marx and Lenin as philosophical nonentities. M. Hyppolite has also had the courage to speak of Marx, and of Freud, those great *damnés de la terre* for academic bourgeois philosophy.

Everyone more or less knows this now. But it is worth saying.

Let me add that I have a debt to M. Hyppolite that he will not suspect. If I have been able to glimpse the revolutionary theoretical scope of Marx’s work in philosophy, it is thanks to a very dear friend, Jacques Martin, who died five years

ago. Now Jacques Martin was privileged, under the Occupation in Paris, to hear M. Hyppolite, then a *professeur de khâgne* (teacher in Letters in the preparatory class for the École Normale Supérieure), comment on certain passages from the *Phenomenology of Mind*. From what I know of it, these were not, believe me, in that very special period, ordinary commentaries. What M. Hyppolite said then helped several of his students to orientate themselves 'in thought', as Kant put it, i.e. also in politics. M. Hyppolite has certainly forgotten the words he then uttered: but not everyone has forgotten them. I am here to bear witness. Against what common sense, the common sense of financiers and lawyers, tells us, there are many writings that blow away, but a few words that remain. No doubt because they have been inscribed in life and history.

I should like to put forward a few schematic themes about Marx's relation to Hegel.

I renounce rhetoric and maieutics, whether Socratic or phenomenological. In philosophy, the true beginning is the end. I shall begin at the end. I shall lay my cards on the table so everyone can see them. These cards are what they are: they carry the stamp of *Marxism-Leninism*. Exposed in this way, they will naturally have the form of a conclusion without premisses.

Let me start with a fact. The Marx-Hegel relationship is a currently decisive theoretical and political question. A *theoretical* question: it governs the future of the number-one strategic science of Modern Times: the science of history, and the future of the philosophy linked to that science: dialectical materialism. A *political* question: it derives from these premisses. It is inscribed in the class struggle at a certain level, in the past as in the present.

To understand the contemporary importance of this fact of the Marx-Hegel relationship, it must be understood as a symptom, and explained as the symptom of the following realities. In order to situate the symptom, I shall state these realities in the form of *Theses*.

Thesis 1 (a statement of fact). *The union, or fusion of the Workers' Movement and Marxist theory* is the greatest event in the history of class societies, i.e. practically in all human history. Beside it, the celebrated great scientific-technical 'mutation' constantly resounding in our ears (the atomic, electronic, computer era, the space-age, etc.) is, despite its great importance, no more than a scientific and technical fact: these events are not of the same order of magnitude, they only bear in their effects on certain aspects of the productive forces, and not on what is decisive, the *relations of production*.

We are living in the necessary effects of this fusion, of this union. Its first results: the socialist revolutions (USSR, China, etc., revolutionary movements in Asia, Vietnam, Latin America, Communist Parties, etc.).

(a) This union realizes the 'union of theory and practice'.

(b) This union is not an established fact but an endless struggle, with its victories and defeats. A struggle in the union itself. With the 1914 War: the crisis of the Second International. At present: the crisis in the International Communist Movement.

The union brings together: the Workers' Movement and Marxist theory . Here I shall only discuss Marxist theory. What is Marxist theory?

Thesis 2 (a statement of fact). Marxist theory includes a science and a philosophy.

In the great classical tradition of the Workers' Movement, from Marx to Lenin, Stalin and Mao, Marxist theory has been defined as containing two distinct theoretical disciplines: a *science* (designated by its general theory: historical materialism) and a philosophy (designated by the term dialectical materialism). There are very special relations between these two disciplines. I shall not examine them in this paper. I shall suggest the following: of these two disciplines, science and philosophy, it is the science that has the place of determination (in the sense defined in *Reading Capital* and closely specified by Badiou in *Critique*, May 1967).¹ *Everything depends on this science.*

Thesis 3. Marx founded a new science: the *science of the history* of social formations, or the science of history.

The foundation of the science of history by Marx is the most important theoretical event of contemporary history .

Let me use an image.

There are a certain number of sciences. They can be said to occupy a certain site in what can be called a theoretical space. Site, space. Metaphorical notions. But they convey certain facts: the proximity of certain sciences; relations between neighbouring sciences; domination of certain sciences over other sciences; but simultaneously sciences without neighbours, insular sciences (isolated positions in a void: e.g. psychoanalysis, etc.).

From this standpoint it is possible to consider that the history of the sciences reveals the existence, in this problematical theoretical space, of *great scientific continents*.

1. The continent of Mathematics (opened up by the Greeks).

2. The continent of Physics (opened up by Galileo).

3. Marx has opened up the third great continent: the continent of History.

A continent, in the sense of this metaphor, is never empty: it is always already 'occupied' by many and varied more or less ideological disciplines which do not know that they belong to that 'continent'. For example, before Marx, the History continent was occupied by the philosophies of history, by political

economy, etc. The opening-up of a continent by a continental science not only disputes the rights and claims of the former occupants, it also completely restructures the old configuration of the 'continent'. A metaphor cannot be spun out indefinitely—otherwise I should here say that the opening-up of a new continent to scientific knowledge presupposes a *change of terrain* or an *epistemological* 'rupture', etc. I leave you the trouble of the temporary needlework required to bring all these metaphors into agreement. But one day we shall have to drop all this sewing and patching for something quite different: to make a theory of the history of the production of knowledges.

Thesis 4. Every great scientific discovery induces a great transformation in philosophy. The scientific discoveries which open up the great scientific continents constitute the major dates in the *periodization* of the history of philosophy:

1st continent (Mathematics): birth of philosophy. Plato.

2nd continent (Physics): profound transformation of philosophy. Descartes.

3rd great continent (History, Marx): revolution in philosophy, announced in the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach. End of classical philosophy, no longer an interpretation of the world, but a '*transformation*' of the world.

'Transformation of the world': an enigmatic word, prophetic but enigmatic. How can philosophy be a transformation of the world? of which world?

Whatever the case, it is possible to say, with Hegel: philosophy always arrives *post festum*. It is always *late*. It is always *postponed* (*différée*).

This thesis is very important to me: in a certain respect (its theoretical elaboration), Marxist philosophy or dialectical materialism *cannot but be behind the science of history*. Time is needed for a philosophy to form and then develop after the great scientific discovery which has silently induced its birth.

All the more so in that, in Marx's case, the scientificity of his discovery has been fiercely denied, fought and condemned by all the self-styled specialists of that continent. The so-called Human Sciences still occupy the old continent. They are now armed with the latest ultra-modern techniques of mathematics, etc., but they are still based theoretically on the same outworn ideological notions as they were in the past, ingeniously rethought and retouched. With a few remarkable exceptions, the prodigious development of the so-called human sciences, above all the development of the social sciences, is no more than the *aggiornamento* of old techniques of social adaptation and social readaptation: of *ideological* techniques. This is the great scandal of the whole of contemporary intellectual history: everyone talks about Marx, almost everyone in the human or social sciences says he is more or less a Marxist. But who has taken the trouble to read Marx closely, to understand his novelty and take the theoretical consequences? Without exception, the specialists of the human sciences one hundred years after Marx work with outdated ideological notions like Aristotelean physi-

cists carrying on with Aristotelean physics fifty years after Galileo. Where are the philosophers who do not take Engels and Lenin for philosophical nonentities? I believe they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Not all Communist philosophers even, far from it, think well of Engels and Lenin as 'philosophers'. Where are the philosophers who have studied the history of the workers' movement, the history of the 1917 Revolution and the Chinese Revolution? Marx and Lenin have the great honour to share the fate of intellectual pariah with Freud and to be travestied when they are discussed as he is travestied. This scandal is not a scandal: the relations that reign between philosophical ideas are what are called relations of forces, ideological, and therefore political relations of forces. But it is bourgeois philosophical ideas that are in power. The question of power is the number-one question in philosophy, too. Philosophy is indeed in the last instance *political*.

Thesis 5. How is Marx's scientific discovery to be explained?

If we take seriously what Marx tells us about the real dialectic of history, it is not 'men' who make history, although its dialectic is realized in them and in their practice, but the masses in the relations of the class struggle. This is true for political history, general history. For the history of the sciences, making due allowances, the same is true. It is not individuals who make the history of the sciences, although its dialectic is realized in them, and in their practice. The empirical individuals known for making such and such a discovery realize in their practice *relations* and a *conjunction* wider than themselves.

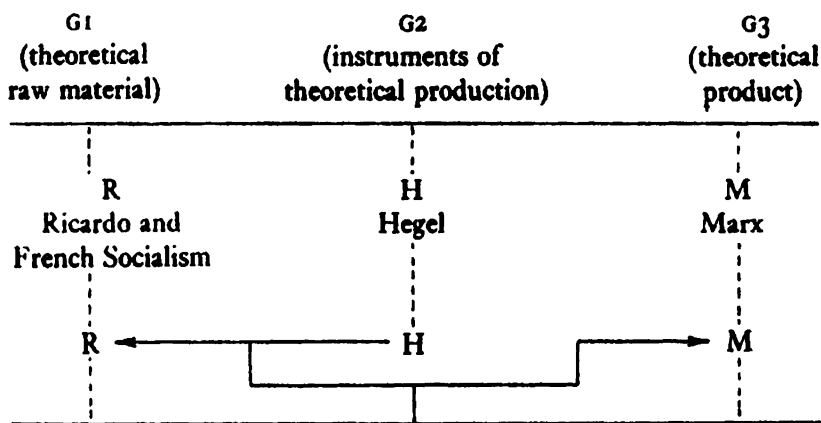
This is where we can pose the problem of the relations between Marx and Hegel.

I shall give an extraordinarily schematic figuration. I hope it will be taken only for what it is: the index of a problem, and the indication of the schematic conditions for it to be *posed*.

To pose it thus in outline, I shall start once again from an indication of Engels's, taken up and developed by Lenin and known by the name of the Three Sources of Marxism. *Sources* is an outdated ideological notion, but what matters to us is the fact that Engels and Lenin do not pose the problem in terms of an individual history, but in terms of a *history of theories*. They establish a pattern involving three theoretical 'characters': Classical German Philosophy, English Political Economy and French Socialism. Say: Hegel, Ricardo, and Babeuf-Fourier, Saint-Simon, etc. To simplify and for expository clarity, I shall partially set aside French Socialism and consider only Ricardo and Hegel, as symbolic representatives of English political economy and German philosophy respectively.

I shall then return to the *extremely* general diagram of 'theoretical practice' which I proposed five years ago in an article on the *Materialist Dialectic*.

Diagram I



Which means very schematically that Marx (*Capital*) is the product of the work of Hegel (German Philosophy) on English Political Economy + French Socialism, in other words, the *Hegelian dialectic* on: *Labour theory of value* (R) + *the class struggle* (FS).

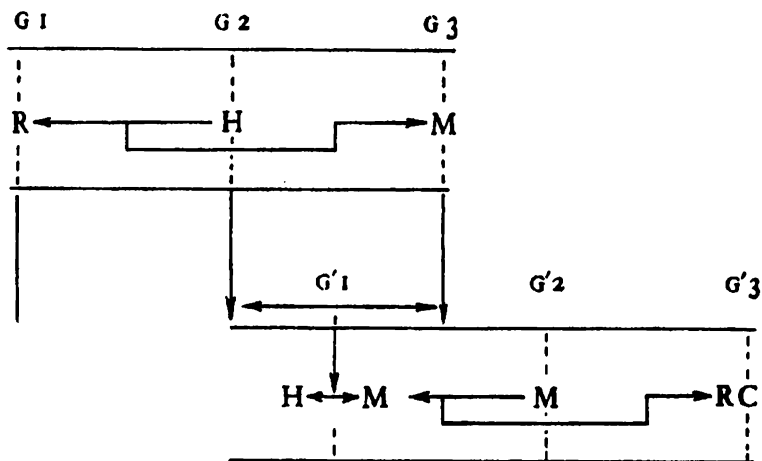
R + FS = raw material, object of Marx's theoretical practice

H = instruments of theoretical production,

the product of the work of the Hegelian dialectic on Ricardo is then *Capital* = M.

[What we tried to do in *Reading Capital* can be represented, in thoroughly indicative fashion, by the following diagram:

Diagram II



We took as our raw material the *Marx-Hegel* relationship (G'1). We set to 'work' on this raw material means of theoretical production G'2 (Marx himself + certain other categories) to produce a result G'3: whatever *Reading Capital* contains that is not aberrant. This labour is provisional—for us above all. The theoretical labour process *must be pursued* in a new cycle in which G'2 might be represented by the (+ or – erroneous) relation between Marx and *Reading Capital*, etc. Experience has very quickly shown that it is impossible to hold to this *internal circle*: the only way to advance is via the experience of the class struggle.]

Let us return to *Diagram I. Capital* is the product of the work of the Hegelian dialectic on Ricardo, etc.

This is a perfectly classical thesis, and one which can, of course, equally well support orthodox-Marxist as anti-Marxist interpretations, since in its schematic formulation, this thesis can give weight to the idea that Marx's relation to Ricardo is reducible to a relation of the *application* of Hegel to Ricardo.

However, this thesis is always stated in the classical tradition along with another equally, if not more, insistent one: the thesis of the *inversion*. It is not Hegel that is applied to Ricardo but Hegel inverted. An enigmatic expression. What does *inversion* mean? The first index of a problem.

A second index. Very many examples can be found in the classics of Marxism. I shall only take one: Lenin's paradoxical and apparently contradictory declarations on the Marx-Hegel relationship.

In *What the 'Friends of the People' are*, Lenin says that Marx has nothing to do with Hegelian triads and that *Capital* is not their application to Ricardo.

But in his *Reading Notes* (known as the *Philosophical Notebooks*), Lenin writes: 'Aphorism: it is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!' ²

However, a page earlier in the same notes, Lenin writes: '*Hegel's analysis of syllogisms . . . recalls Marx's imitation of Hegel in Chapter One*.' ³

An expression notably recalling a famous and enigmatic expression of Marx, who, in the Afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, says: 'Just as I was working at the first volume of "Das Kapital", it was the good pleasure of the peevish, arrogant, mediocre *epigonoï* who now talk large in cultured Germany, to treat Hegel in the same way as the brave Moses Mendelssohn in Lessing's time treated *Spinoza*, i.e. as a "dead dog". I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even *here and there*, in the chapter on the theory of value, *coquetted (kokettieren)* with the modes of expression peculiar to him. . . .'

A strange application of Hegel to Ricardo. Let me sum up:

1. Not Hegel: but Hegel *inverted*. Inversion = rational kernel extracted from its mystical shell.

2. Further: 'coquetting' with Hegelian modes of expression (says Marx); an 'imitation' (says Lenin).

3. Leaving aside the imitation and coquetry, there remains the strange inversion. It is the inversion of idealism into materialism: matter in place of the idea. But to say this is to be much too general with respect to what is in question. For Feuerbach had already said and done just this, *in ideology*. Now, our inversion does not only concern the general world outlook but one very precise point: the *dialectic*. Marx 'inverts' it, for his dialectic is the 'direct opposite' of the Hegelian dialectic. What is the opposite of the Hegelian dialectic? A mystery. We must go further: to the *rational kernel*, i.e. to a content with a scientific theoretical value. Then it is no longer a matter of inversion but one of *critical extraction*, of a 'demystification' of the dialectic. What is a demystification? There is no longer any question of an application.

I have brought these indices together and, with considerable difficulty and at the cost of much clumsiness, have advanced the following hypothesis:

1. Marx did not 'apply' Hegel to Ricardo. He made something from Hegel *work* on Ricardo.

2. This something from Hegel is first Hegel *inverted*. The inversion of Hegel only concerns his *world outlook* = the inversion of idealism into materialism. World outlook = *tendency*. Nothing more: the tendency of a World Outlook does not *ipso facto* provide any scientific concepts.

3. This something from Hegel is thus something quite different from the *inversion* of the idealist tendency into the materialist tendency. It is something which concerns the *dialectic*. Here the metaphor of the inversion ceases to serve any useful purpose: it is replaced by a different metaphor. To invert the Hegelian dialectic = to demystify it = to *separate* the rational kernel from the irrational shell. This separation is not a mere sorting out: (take some and leave some). It can only be a transformation. Marx's dialectic can only be the Hegelian dialectic worked-transformed.

4. Thus Marx makes Hegel work on Ricardo: he makes a transformation of the Hegelian dialectic work on Ricardo.

It is indeed necessary to say that the Hegelian dialectic has been *transformed* in the theoretical work it has carried out on Ricardo. The theoretical instrument of labour which transforms the theoretical raw material is itself transformed by its work of transformation.

The result is the dialectic at work in *Capital*: *it is no longer the Hegelian dialectic but a quite different dialectic*.

We took this difference for the raw material of our work, as I have suggested in *Diagram II*.

Hence the results that appear in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*.

Essentially we found in Marx:

- A non-Hegelian conception of *history*.
- A non-Hegelian conception of the *social structure* (a structured whole in dominance).
- A non-Hegelian conception of the *dialectic*.

Hence, if these theses are well-founded, they have crucial consequences for philosophy: above all, the rejection of the basic system of classical philosophical categories.

This system can be written:

(Origin = ((Subject = Object) = Truth) = End = Foundation)

This system is circular, because the Foundation is the fact that the adequation of subject and object is the teleological origin of all truth. I cannot justify this circular sequence here.

There follows from this rejection a new conception of philosophy—not only a new conception—but a new modality of existence, I shall say a new *practice* of philosophy: a philosophical discourse that speaks *from somewhere else* than classical philosophical discourse did. To make this comprehensible, let me invoke the analogy of psychoanalysis.

1. The point is to carry out a *displacement* = to make something *move over* (*bouger*) in the internal disposition of the philosophical categories.

2. Such that philosophical discourse changes its *modality*—speaks *otherwise* (*autrement*), which creates the difference between interpreting the world and changing it.

3. Without philosophy disappearing nonetheless.

Apparently it is the most conscious discourse there is. *In fact* it is the discourse of an *unconscious*. The point is no more to suppress philosophy than it would be to suppress the unconscious in Freud. What is required is, by working on the phantasms of philosophy (which underly its categories), to make something move over in the disposition of the instances of the philosophical Unconscious, so that the unconscious discourse of philosophy finds its *site*—and speaks at the top of its voice about the very *site* assigned to it by the instances which produce it.

I shall leave these crucial questions here.

One point remains. Everything we have published on Hegel in fact leaves out the positive heritage Marx, by his own confession, owed to Hegel. Marx transformed the Hegelian dialectic, but he owed Hegel a crucial gift: *the idea of the dialectic*. We have not discussed this. I should like to say a little about it.

In the Afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, Marx discusses the dialectic in the following terms: ‘. . . The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to

present (*darstellen*) its general form of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

'In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure the existing state of things (*das Bestehende*). In its rational shape (*Gestalt*) it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in the positive comprehension of the existing state of things at the same time also the comprehension of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every developed form as in fluid movement and thus takes into account its transient nature, lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.'⁴

Two notions stand out in this passage:

1. The dialectic is critical and *revolutionary*.

Now, the ambiguity of the dialectic is clear. It can be

- (a) either a *transfiguration* of the existing state of things, the '*fait accompli*' (*das Bestehende*), the existing order. The dialectic: benediction of the existing order (social, scientific).
- (b) or *critical and revolutionary*: it implies the *relativity* of every established order, social and theoretical, of societies and of systems, of institutions and of concepts.

The dialectic: a critique of the absolute by historical relativism.

This theme is very clear in Engels: the dialectic sets concepts in motion. A direct adoption of the Hegelian theme: *Reason* as a critique of the *Intellect*. Reason sets the concepts of the Intellect in motion.

The classical opposition in Marxism between

metaphysical materialism	}	= metaphysical/dialectical opposition
dialectical materialism		

is thus no more than the adoption of the Hegelian opposition between *Intellect* and *Reason*.

Stop at this and one has not yet left Hegel. It is still very formal and thus very dangerous. The proof: the spontaneously relativist/historicist interpretation of this conception of the dialectic as a critique of the fixity of the intellect. Counterproof: Lenin's vigorous reaction against relativism and historicism (*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*), bourgeois ideologies of history and of the dialectic.

2. But there is something else of much greater importance: does the Hegelian *dialectic* contain a *rational kernel*—and if so, what is it?

To see this, a *long detour* is required. It is necessary to go back through Marx's theoretical history. The decisive moment in this history is the rupture with *Feuerbach*. This rupture is announced in the lightning flash of the Theses on Feuerbach. The Theses on Feuerbach were written in haste after a crucial theoretical event: *the introduction of Hegel into Feuerbach* (it took place in the 1844

Manuscripts). The *Manuscripts* are an *explosive* text. Hegel, reintroduced by force into Feuerbach, induces a prodigious *acting out* of the Young Marx's theoretical contradiction, in which is achieved the rupture with Theoretical Humanism.

To speak of Marx's rupture with Theoretical Humanism is a very precise thesis: if Marx broke with this ideology, that means he had espoused it; if he had espoused it (and it was no unconsummated marriage) that means it existed. The Theoretical Humanism Marx espoused was that of Feuerbach.

Marx 'discovered' Feuerbach, like all the Young Hegelians, in very special conditions, which I have said something about, following Auguste Cornu. For a time Feuerbach 'saved' the young Hegelian radicals theoretically from the insoluble contradictions induced in their liberal-rationalist 'philosophical conscience' by the obstinacy of the damned Prussian State, which, being 'in itself' Reason and Freedom, persisted in misrecognizing its own 'essence', persevering beyond all propriety in the Unreason of Despotism. Feuerbach 'saved' them theoretically by providing them with the reason for the Reason-Unreason contradiction: by a theory of the *alienation of Man*.

Obviously it would be impossible, on whatever basis, even a Marxist one, to think that the matter of Feuerbach can be settled by a confessional note of the kind: a few quotations from him, or from Marx and Engels, who *had* read him. Nor is it settled by that adjective of convenience and ignorance which nonetheless resounds in so many disputes: a *speculative* anthropology. As though it were enough to remove the speculation from the anthropology for the anthropology (assuming one knows what that word designates) to stand up: cut the head off a duck and it won't go far. As though it were also enough to pronounce these magic words to call Feuerbach by his name (philosophers, even if they are not watchdogs, are like you and me: for them to come, they must at least be called *by their names*). Let me therefore try to call Feuerbach by his name, even if need be by an abbreviation of his name.

Of course, I shall only discuss the Feuerbach of the years 1839–45, i.e. the author of *The Essence of Christianity* and the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*—and not the post-1848 Feuerbach, who, against his own earlier precepts, put a lot of 'water in his wine' for fear of the (1848) Revolution.

The Feuerbach of *The Essence of Christianity* occupies a quite extraordinary position in the history of philosophy. Indeed, he brings off the *tour de force* of putting an 'end to classical German philosophy', of overthrowing (to be quite precise: of 'inverting') Hegel, the Last of the Philosophers, in whom all its history is summed up, by a philosophy that was *theoretically retrogressive* with respect to the great German idealist philosophy.

Retrogressive must be understood in a precise sense. If Feuerbach's philosophy carried in it traces of German idealism, its theoretical foundations date from *before* German idealism. With Feuerbach we return from 1810 to 1750, from the nineteenth to the eighteenth century. Paradoxically, for reasons that should make

a good 'dialectic' derived from Hegel giddy, it was by its *retrogressive* character in theory that Feuerbach's philosophy had fortunate progressive effects in the ideology, and even in the political history, of its partisans. But enough on this.

A philosophy which carries *traces* of German idealism but which settles accounts with German idealism, and its supreme representative, Hegel, by a *theoretically retrogressive* system, what are we to make of that?

The *traces* of German idealism: Feuerbach takes up the philosophical problems posed by German idealism. Above all the problems of Pure Reason and Practical Reason, the problems of Nature and Freedom, the problems of Knowledge (what can I know?), of Morality (what ought I to do?) and of Religion (what can I hope for?). Hence Kant's fundamental problems, but 'returned to' via Hegel's critique and solutions (broadly the critique of Kantian distinctions as abstractions, which for Hegel derive from a misrecognition of Reason reduced to the role of the Intellect). Feuerbach poses the problems of German idealism with the intention of giving them a Hegelian type of solution: indeed, he tries to pose the *unity* of the Kantian *distinctions* or *abstractions* in something resembling the Hegelian Idea. This 'something' resembling the Hegelian Idea, while being its radical *inversion*, is *Man*, or *Nature*, or *Sinnlichkeit* (simultaneously sensuous materiality, receptivity and sensuous intersubjectivity).

To hold all this together, I mean to think as a *single* unit these three notions: Man, Nature and *Sinnlichkeit*, is a dumbfounding theoretical gamble, which makes Feuerbach's 'philosophy' a philosophical velleity, i.e. an actual theoretical inconsistency invested in a 'wish' for an impossible philosophical consistency. A moving 'wish', certainly, even a pathetic one, since it expresses and proclaims in great solemn cries the desperate will to escape from a philosophical ideology against which it remains definitively a rebel, i.e. its prisoner. The fact is that this impossible unity gave rise to a work which has played a part in history and produced disconcerting effects, some immediate (on Marx and his friends), others postponed (on Nietzsche, on Phenomenology, on a certain modern theology, and even on the recent 'hermeneutic' philosophy which derives from it).

It was an impossible unity (Man-Nature-*Sinnlichkeit*) which enabled Feuerbach to 'resolve' the great philosophical problems of German idealism, 'transcending' Kant and 'inverting' Hegel. For example, the Kantian problems of the distinction between Pure Reason and Practical Reason, between Nature and Freedom, etc., find a solution with Feuerbach in a *unique* principle: Man and his attributes. For example, the Kantian problem of scientific objectivity, and the Hegelian problem of religion find a solution with Feuerbach in an extraordinary theory of *mirror* objectivity ('the object of a being is the objectification of its Essence': the object—the objects—of Man are the objectification of the Human Essence). For example, the Kantian problem of the Idea and History, transcended by Hegel in the theory of the Spirit as the ultimate moment of the Idea, finds a solution with Feuerbach in an extraordinary theory of the intersubjectivity con-

stitutive of the human species. As the principal term in all these solutions, we always find Man, his attributes, and his 'essential' objects (mirror 'reflections' of his Essence).

Thus, with Feuerbach, Man is the unique, primordial and fundamental concept, the *factotum*, which stands in for Kant's Transcendental Subject, Noumenal Subject, Empirical Subject and Idea, which also stands in for Hegel's Idea. The 'end of classical German philosophy' is then quite simply a verbal suppression of its solutions which respects its problems. It is a replacement of its solutions by heteroclite philosophical notions gathered from here and there in the philosophy of the eighteenth century (sensualism, empiricism, the materialism of *Sinnlichkeit*, borrowed from the tradition of Condillac; a pseudo-biologism vaguely inspired by Diderot; an idealism of Man and the 'heart' drawn from Rousseau), and unified by a *play on theoretical words* within the concept of Man.

Hence the extraordinary position and the effects Feuerbach could draw from his inconsistency: declaring himself in turn and all at once (and he saw no malice or inconsistency in it himself) a materialist, an idealist, a rationalist, a sensualist, an empiricist, a realist, an atheist and a humanist. Hence his declamations against Hegel's speculation, reduced to *abstraction*. Hence his appeals to the concrete, to the 'thing itself', to the real, to the sensuous, to matter, against all the forms of alienation, whose ultimate essence is for him constituted by *abstraction*. Hence the sense of his 'inversion' of Hegel, which Marx long espoused as the real critique of Hegel, whereas it is still entirely trapped in the empiricism of which Hegel is no more than the sublimated theory: to invert the attribute into the subject, to invert the Idea into the sensuous real, into matter, to invert the Abstract into the Concrete, etc. All that within the category of *Man*, who is the Real, the Sensuous, and the Concrete. An old tune whose worn-out variations are still served up for us today.

There you have the *Theoretical Humanism* which Marx had to deal with. I say *theoretical*, for Man is not just for Feuerbach an Idea in the Kantian sense, but the theoretical foundation for *all* his 'philosophy', as the Cogito was for Descartes, the Transcendental Subject for Kant and the Idea for Hegel. It is this Theoretical Humanism that we find in so many words in the *1844 Manuscripts*.

But before turning to Marx, one more word on the consequences of this paradoxical philosophical position which claims radically to abolish German idealism but which respects its problems and hopes to resolve them by the intervention of a heap of eighteenth century concepts, gathered together within the theoretical injunction of Man, which stands in for their 'philosophical' unity and consistency.

For it is not possible to 'return' with impunity to a position *behind* a philosophy while retaining the problems it has brought to light.

The fundamental consequence of this theoretical retrogression accompanied by a retention of current problems is to induce an enormous *contraction* of the

existing philosophical problematic, behind the appearances of its 'inversion', which is no more than the impossible 'wish' to invert it.

Engels and Lenin were perfectly well aware of this 'contraction' with respect to Hegel. 'Feuerbach is small in comparison with Hegel.' Let us go straight to the essential: what Feuerbach unforgiveably sacrificed of Hegel is History and the Dialectic, or rather, since it is one and the same thing for Hegel, History *or* the Dialectic. Here too, Marx, Engels and Lenin made no mistake: Feuerbach is a materialist in the sciences, but . . . he is an idealist in History. Feuerbach speaks of Nature but . . . he does not speak of History—Nature standing in for it. Feuerbach is not dialectical. Etc.

Having obtained this perspective, let us specify these established judgements.

Of course, history certainly is discussed by Feuerbach, who hopes to distinguish between the 'Hindu', the 'Judaic', the 'Roman', etc., 'human natures'. But there is no *theory* of history in his work. And above all there is no trace of the theory of history we owe to Hegel as a *dialectical process of production of forms (figures)*.

Of course, as we can now begin to say, what irremediably disfigures the Hegelian conception of History as a dialectical process is its *teleological* conception of the dialectic, inscribed in the very *structures* of the Hegelian dialectic at an extremely precise point: the *Aufhebung* (transcendence-preserving-the-transcended-as-the-internalized-transcended), directly expressed in the Hegelian category of the *negation of the negation* (or negativity).

To criticize the Hegelian philosophy of History because it is *teleological*, because from its origins it is in pursuit of a goal (the realization of Absolute Knowledge), hence to reject the teleology in the philosophy of history, but to return to the Hegelian dialectic as such at the same time, is to fall into a strange contradiction: for the Hegelian dialectic, too, is teleological in its *structures*, since the key structures of the Hegelian dialectic is the *negation of the negation*, which is the *teleology itself*, within the dialectic.

That is why the question of the structures of the dialectic is the key question dominating the whole problem of a materialist dialectic. That is why Stalin can be taken for a perceptive Marxist philosopher, at least on this point, since he struck the negation of the negation from the 'laws' of the dialectic. But to the extent, I say to the extent, that it is possible to abstract from the teleology in the Hegelian conception of history and the dialectic, it is still true that we owe Hegel something which Feuerbach, blinded by his obsession with Man and the Concrete, was absolutely incapable of understanding: the conception of History as a *process*. Indisputably, for it passed into his works, and *Capital* is the evidence, Marx owes Hegel this decisive philosophical category, *process*.

He owes him even more, which Feuerbach was again unable even to suspect. He owes him the concept of a process *without a subject*. It is fashionable in

philosophical conversations, which are sometimes turned into books, to say that in Hegel, History is the 'History of the alienation of man'. Whatever the intention behind the pronunciation of such a formulation, it *states* a philosophical proposition which has an implacable meaning, one which is locatable in its offspring, if not discernible in their mother. It is to state: History is *a process of alienation which has a subject*, and that subject is man.

Now, as M. Hyppolite has very well noted, nothing is more foreign to Hegel's thought than this *anthropological* conception of History. For Hegel, History is certainly a process of alienation, but this process does not have Man as its subject. First, in the Hegelian History it is not a matter of Man, but of the Spirit, and if one must *at all costs* (which in respect of a 'subject' is false anyway) have a 'subject' in History, it is the 'nations' that should be discussed, or more accurately (and we are approaching the truth) it is the *moments* of the development of the Idea become Spirit. What does this mean? Something very simple, but if it must be 'interpreted', something important from the theoretical point of view: History is not the alienation of Man, but the alienation of the Spirit, i.e. the ultimate moment of the alienation of the Idea. For Hegel, the process of alienation does not 'begin' with (human) *History*, since History is itself no more than the alienation of Nature, itself the alienation of Logic. Alienation, which is the dialectic (in its final principle the negation of the negation or *Aufhebung*), or to speak more precisely, the *process of alienation*, is not, as a whole current of modern philosophy which 'corrects' and 'contracts' Hegel would have it, peculiar to Human History.

From the point of view of Human History the process of alienation has *always already begun*. That means, if these terms are taken seriously, that, in Hegel, History is thought as a *process of alienation without a subject*, or a dialectical process *without a subject*. Once one is prepared to consider just for a moment that the whole Hegelian teleology is contained in the expressions I have just stated, in the categories of alienation, or in what constitutes the master structure of the category of the dialectic (the negation of the negation), and once one accepts, if that is possible, to *abstract* from what represents the teleology in these expressions, then there remains the formulation: history is *a process without a subject*. I think I can affirm: this category of *a process without a subject*, which must of course be torn from the grip of the Hegelian teleology, undoubtedly represents the greatest theoretical debt linking Marx to Hegel.

I well know that, finally, there is in Hegel a *subject* for this process of alienation without a subject. But it is a very strange subject, one on which many important comments would have to be made: this subject is the very *teleology* of the *process*, it is the *Idea*, in the process of self-alienation which constitutes it as the Idea.

This is not an esoteric thesis on Hegel: it can be verified at each instant, i.e. at each 'moment' of the Hegelian process. To say that there is no *subject* to the

process of alienation whether in History, in Nature or in Logic, is quite simply to say that one cannot at any 'moment' assign as a subject to the process of alienation any 'subject' whatsoever: neither some being (not even man) nor some nation, nor some 'moment' of the process, neither History, nor Nature, nor Logic.

The only *subject* of the process of alienation is *the process itself in its teleology*. The subject of the process is not even the End of the process itself (a mistake is possible here: does not Hegel say that the Spirit is 'Substance becoming Subject'?), it is the process of alienation as in pursuit of its End, and hence the process of alienation itself as teleological.

Nor is teleological a determination which is added to the process of alienation without a subject *from the outside*. The teleology of the process of alienation is inscribed in black and white in its definition: in the concept of *alienation*, which is the teleology itself *in the process*.

Now perhaps it is here that the strange status of *Logic* in Hegel begins to be clearer. For what is Logic? The science of the Idea, i.e. the exposition of its concept, the *concept of the process of alienation without a subject*, in other words, the concept of the process of self-alienation which, considered in its totality, is nothing but the Idea. Thus conceived, Logic, or the concept of the Idea, is the dialectic, the 'path' of the process as a process, the 'absolute method'. If Logic is nothing but the concept of the Idea (of the process of alienation without a subject), it is then the concept of this strange subject we are looking for. But the fact that this subject is only the concept of the *process of alienation itself*, in other words, this subject is the dialectic, i.e. the very movement of the negation of the negation, reveals the extraordinary paradox of Hegel. The process of alienation without a subject (or the dialectic) is the only subject recognized by Hegel. There is no subject to the process: *it is the process itself which is a subject in so far as it does not have a subject*.

If we want to find what, finally, stands in for 'Subject' in Hegel, it is in the teleological nature of this process, in the *teleological* nature of the dialectic, that it must be sought: the End is already there in the Origin. That is also why there is in Hegel no *origin*, nor (which is never anything but its phenomenon) any beginning. The origin, indispensable to the teleological nature of the process (since it is only the reflection of its End), has to be *denied* from the moment it is *affirmed* for the process of alienation to be a process without a subject. It would take too long to justify this proposition, which I propose simply in order to anticipate later developments: this implacable exigency (to affirm and in the same moment to *deny* the origin) was consciously assumed by Hegel in his theory of the *beginning* of Logic: Being is immediately non-Being. The beginning of the Logic is the theory of the non-primordial nature of the origin. Hegel's Logic is the Origin affirmed-denied: the first form of a concept that Derrida has introduced into philosophical reflection, *erasure (rature)*.

But the Hegelian 'erasure' constituted by the Logic from its first words, is the negation of the negation, dialectical and hence teleological. It is in teleology that there lies the true Hegelian Subject. Take away the teleology, there remains the philosophical category that Marx inherited: the category of a *process without a subject*.

That is Marx's principal *positive* debt to Hegel: the concept of a *process without a subject*.

It underpins *Capital* from beginning to end. Marx was perfectly aware of it. Witness this note added by Marx to the French edition of *Capital*.

Marx: *Le Capital*, tome 1 (a note found only in the French edition!) :

The word 'procès' (process) which expresses *a development considered in the totality of its real conditions* has long been a part of scientific language throughout Europe. In France it was first introduced slightly shamefacedly in its Latin form—*processus*. Then, stripped of this pedantic disguise, it slipped into books on chemistry, physics, physiology, etc., and into a few works of metaphysics. In the end it will obtain a certificate of complete naturalization. Let us note in passing that in ordinary speech the Germans, like the French use the word *Prozess* (*procès*, process) in the legal sense [i.e., trial].⁵

In passing, let me draw attention to the fact that the concept of a process without a subject also underpins the whole of Freud's work.

But to speak of a process without a subject implies that the notion of a subject is an *ideological notion*.

If the following double thesis is taken seriously:

1. the concept process is scientific,
2. the notion subject is ideological, then two consequences follow:

1. a revolution in the sciences: the science of history becomes formally possible,

2. a revolution in philosophy: for all classical philosophy depends on the categories of subject and object (object = a mirror reflection of *subject*).

But this positive heritage is still *formal*. The question posed then is as follows: What are *the conditions of the process* of history?

Here Marx no longer owes anything to Hegel: on the decisive point he contributes something without any precedent, i.e.:

There is no such thing as a process except in relations (sous des rapports): the relations of production (to which Capital is restricted) and other (political, ideological) relations.

Our meditations on this scientific discovery and its philosophical consequences are not yet over: we are only beginning to suspect them and assess their

extent. It hardly need be said that it is not by dabbling in structuralist ideology that we can obtain the means to explore the immense space of the continent that Marx has opened for us (Marx's *Verbindungen* do not amount to a 'combinatory'!).

The continent was opened up a hundred years ago. The only people who have ventured into it are militants of the revolutionary class struggle. To our shame, intellectuals do not even suspect the existence of this continent, except to annex and exploit it as a common colony.

We must recognize and explore this continent, to liberate it of its occupiers. To reach it it is enough to follow those who went before us a hundred years ago: the revolutionary militants of the class struggle. We must learn with them what they already know. On this condition we too shall be able to make discoveries in it, of the kind announced by Marx in 1845: discoveries which help not to 'interpret' the world, but to change it. To change the world is not to explore the moon. It is to make the revolution and build socialism without regressing back to capitalism.

The rest, including the moon, will be given to us in addition.

23 January 1968

Notes

1. 'Le (Re)-commencement du matérialisme dialectique', *Critique*, no. 240, May 1967.
2. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 38 (London and Moscow, 1961), p. 180.
3. *ibid.*, p. 178.
4. *Capital*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1961), p. 20.
5. Karl Marx, *Le Capital*, t. 1 (Éditions Sociales, Paris, 1948), p. 181n.